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ABSTRACT

Components of transition planning to prepare students with learning disabilities for postsecondary education are described, with attention to student self-determination, self-evaluation, and selection of post-school transition goals and appropriate educational experiences during high school. Provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Act, Section 504, and Americans with Disabilities Act are compared. It is suggested that success in postsecondary education may depend on the student's willingness to disclose having a learning disability and on having an accurate understanding of effective strategies and academic adjustments. Two curricula are identified to help students with learning disabilities to develop self-knowledge and advocacy skills and to identify realistic post-high school goals. Activities are suggested to build postsecondary planning into the high school curriculum. Frequently used accommodations for students with learning disabilities are also listed. Seven resource guides and two resource organizations are listed. (Contains 21 references.) (SW)

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ED 384 186

Preparing Students with Learning Disabilities for Success in Postsecondary Education

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Preparing Students with Learning Disabilities for Success in Postsecondary Education

by Martha Wille-Gregory, Jill Williams Graham, and Cathy Hughes, Instructors, Center for Innovations in Special Education

The number of students with disabilities attending postsecondary education has tripled since 1978. Consistent with this trend, increasing numbers of students with learning disabilities are pursuing postsecondary education. In fact, students with learning disabilities now comprise 25% of all students with disabilities at the postsecondary level (Henderson, 1992). This is encouraging when one considers that, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, " ... lifetime earning differences between low and high levels of education are significant and the prediction is that those differences will become even more dramatic" ("Census: Education increasing ... ", 1994). Follow-up studies of high school graduates with learning disabilities have indicated that these individuals are often underemployed; only 38% find full-time employment, and a high percentage hold entry-level, unskilled or semi-skilled positions with lower social status and few benefits (Sitlington & Frank, 1990; Wagner, 1989). This increase in postsecondary attendance rates offers hope that increasing numbers of students with learning disabilities will obtain employment consistent with their interests and abilities.

Although attendance has increased, low retention and completion rates at the postsecondary level are common among students with learning disabilities (Aune, 1991). It is disturbing that many students fail to complete their degree or certification given the supports available to them through the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

A variety of reasons for limited success in the postsecondary setting among students with learning disabilities has been put forth in the literature: (1) lack of knowledge of one's disability and how it affects learning; (2) tracking into lower level courses or taking academics in a resource room during high school; (3) limited understanding of one's legal rights; (4) lack of self-advocacy skills; (5) lack of knowledge of available support services or how to access support on campus; and (6) inadequate services for students with disabilities at the postsecondary level (Aune, 1991; Brinckerhoff, 1994). Most of these factors can be addressed at the secondary level as we prepare students for the transition to postsecondary education.

Recent concerns regarding the inadequacies of current practices in secondary education for students with learning disabilities have led to calls to promote self-advocacy, independence and responsibility within these learners (Brinckerhoff, 1994; Sitlington & Frank, 1990; Spector, Decker, & Shaw, 1991). Unfortunately, in the high school setting, teacher-directed approaches to educational planning and service provision continue to dominate, with resultant student dependency (Brinckerhoff, 1994; Wilson, 1994).

It is clear that more effective planning and preparation are critical if students are to meet success in reaching their postsecondary goals. Halpern (1994), in a position statement from the Council for Exceptional Children, Division on Career Development and Transition, identified four major components essential to the transition planning process. These components provide an excellent framework for planning to guide preparation for postsecondary education. They are:

- an emerging sense of student empowerment that eventually enhances student ***self-determination*** within the transition planning process;
- student ***self-evaluation***, as a foundation for transition planning;
- student identification of ***post-school transition goals*** that are consistent with the outcomes of their self-evaluations; and
- student selection of ***appropriate educational experiences*** to pursue during high school, both within school and within the broader community, that are consistent with their self-evaluations and their post-school goals (p.118).

This monograph will describe these components of the transition planning process as they relate to preparing students with learning disabilities for postsecondary education. A brief outline of pertinent legislation and resources will also be provided.

SELF-DETERMINATION

In recent years, educators have recognized that self-determination promotes success at school, on the job, in the community, and in social relationships. Self-determination may be seen as a critical factor in realizing the dreams we have for all students. "The outcome for a self-determined person is the ability to realize his or her own potential, to become a productive member of a community, and to obtain his or her goals

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without infringing on the rights, responsibilities, and goals of others" (Serna & Lau-Smith, 1995, p.144).

There is evolving agreement about the skills, behaviors, and attitudes that define a self-determined individual:

- awareness and acceptance of personal interests, strengths, limitations, and needs;
- ability to set and pursue realistic goals and make decisions based on self-knowledge and an awareness of the environment;
- social competence and assertiveness;
- awareness and use of resources;
- acceptance of one's interdependence and skill in collaboration and networking with others;
- self-monitoring/evaluation of performance and willingness to make adjustments;
- an understanding of rights and responsibilities conferred by the ADA and Section 504 (Hoffman & Field, 1994; Serna, 1995; Serna & Lau-Smith, 1995).

Possession of such knowledge and skills gives us a sense of control over our life. Successful adults with learning disabilities described the key to success as the ability to make a conscious decision to take charge of one's life and make adaptations necessary to reach one's goals. (Reiff, Ginsberg, & Gerber, 1995).

And yet, many students with learning disabilities fail to acquire the essential skills, knowledge, and attitudes that allow them to assume control over their lives. The learned helplessness, passivity, poor self-concept, limited social skills, ineffective use of strategies, and lack of self-monitoring -- characteristics of many students with learning disabilities -- "result in the antithesis of self-determination, a feeling of total lack of control and an expectation of failure" (Wilson, 1994, p.181). Further, these students are seldom afforded the opportunity to set their own course in life or learning. Parents and professionals often take on the role of advocate for the student, evaluating and explaining his or her learning difficulties to others, developing the IEP, determining needed accommodations, and monitoring progress.

Active student involvement in the IEP/transition planning process provides an excellent opportunity for students with learning disabilities to: assess their interests, strengths, limitations, and needs; determine realistic goals and the steps necessary to reach those goals; and practice decision making, problem solving, and assertive communication skills (Hughes, 1992). Resources to assist educators who wish to cultivate self-determination and empower students to participate effectively in the IEP/transition planning process are described below.

The Educational Planning Strategy: I PLAN is a metacognitive strategy focused on developing effective planning and communication skills in preparation for participation in the IEP meeting. The strategy can be taught to students in upper elementary and higher grades in about six hours over a one to two-week period. It has been found that junior and senior high students with learning disabilities who learn this strategy contribute more information during IEP conferences than students who are merely told about the IEP conference (Bos & Vaughn, 1991). With minimal modification, the I-PLAN strategy can be used to prepare students to participate in a variety of planning or problem-solving meetings with teachers, employers, or co-workers.

The revised (November 1994) edition of the I-Plan, entitled *Self-Advocacy*, is available for a cost of $14.00 through Edge Enterprises, Inc., PO Box 1304, Lawrence, KS 66044, (913) 749-1473.

The ChoiceMaker Self-Determination Transition Curriculum: Self-Directed IEP teaches students how to manage their own IEP meeting in 11 steps. The methods and materials can be used with a broad range of students, including those with mild to moderate learning and behavior problems. The instructional package includes student and teacher workbooks and two student videos designed to show the benefits and steps of the strategy. "The ChoiceMaker approach teaches leadership of the IEP process through acquisition of crucial self-determination skills which are based upon an experiential understanding by students of their interests, strengths, and limits" (Martin & Marshall, 1995 p.152).

The ChoiceMaker curriculum is available from the University of Colorado, Division of Continuing Education, PO Box 7150, Colorado Springs, CO 80933-7150, 800-253-7538.

Self-Determination In The Transition To Postsecondary Education

Self-determination in the postsecondary setting requires students to be able to exert their rights under the law. PL 94 - 142, now the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504, and ADA were established to provide equal access to people with disabilities. However, individual rights and the assumption of responsibility conferred by IDEA and Section 504/ADA are quite different. This can present significant challenges for students as they leave the protection of the secondary school environment and the IDEA. The "right to a free and appropriate public education" provided through IDEA does not extend to postsecondary education. There is a dramatic increase in student responsibilities in the postsecondary environment, as shown in ***Figure 1.***

Under IDEA, it is the school's obligation to assess, diagnose, develop an educational plan, provide service, and evaluate progress. Parent involvement in decision-making regarding their child has been required. Student involvement has been recognized as critical to transition planning through the IDEA mandates to: (1) base planning on student interests and preferences, and (2) invite the student to the IEP meeting when transition is to be discussed. The spirit of IDEA is to empower the student as an active shaper of his or her future. Section 504 and ADA require students to: (1) disclose his or her disability to the college/university; (2) provide documentation related to the disability; (3) negotiate for needed accom-

modations/adjustments and monitor the effectiveness of accommodations provided. Specific provisions of these laws are outlined on page 4. Success in postsecondary education may depend on the student's willingness to accept these responsiblities and ability to advocate effectively for his rights.

Figure 1
Responsibilities Under P.L. 94-142 and Section 504 at Secondary and Postsecondary Levels

Issue	Responsibility at Secondary Level	Respons. at Postsec. Level
Identification	School	Student
Assessment	School	Student
Programming	School/parent	Student-institution
Advocacy	School/parent	Student
Decision making	Placement team	Student
Transition Planning	Placement team	Student

(Brinckerhoff, Shaw & McGuire, 1992, p. 421)

SELF-EVALUATION

Self-evaluation is an issue of particular concern for students with learning disabilities who plan to pursue postsecondary education. As indicated earlier, it is the student's responsiblity to identify the need for academic adjustments in the postsecondary setting. Success in the postsecondary setting may hinge on a willingness to disclose one's disability and an accurate understanding of effective strategies and academic adjustments. The student therefore must understand his or her strengths, limitations, and needs as well as how his or her disability affects learning.

Unfortunately, too many students with learning disabilities desire to hide their disability and do not avail themselves of support and services to which they are entitled. As one college student with a learning disability pointed out, "I think it would help me if I knew more about learning disabilities. If I knew more about LD, it might be easier for me to work with it instead of fighting against it so much. This learning disability is a part of me. If I don't understand it how can I understand myself, or let other people know about me?" ("Cory" in Wren, Adelman, Pike, & Wilson, 1987, p.4).

"Students must be taught ... how to examine and evaluate their own academic, vocational, independent living, and personal/social skills" (Halpern, 1994, p.119). We can involve students within the context of both formal and informal assessment procedures we have traditionally used to guide educational planning. The key is to provide opportunities for students to use assessment results to improve self-knowledge, ensuring that they understand the results and asking them to reflect on the meaning/implications/application of assessment findings. At the postsecondary level, students must be able to respond concisely to frequently asked questions such as:

(1) What *are* learning disabilities?
(2) What is your specific learning disability?
(3) How can I help you *learn*?
(4) How can I help you *demonstrate* your knowledge?
(Wren et al., 1989, p. 9)

Tools for Transition is an excellent resource to assist secondary students who have mild to moderate learning disabilities in developing the self-knowledge and advocacy skills necessary for success at the postsecondary level. This curriculum includes a variety of materials that are specifically developed for promoting self-awareness, self-reliance, independent decision making, and vocational awareness. *Tools for Transition* is published by the American Guidance Service, Circle Pines, MN 55014-1796.

IDENTIFYING POSTSCHOOL GOALS:

Significant preparation is necessary for students to be able to establish realistic goals for themselves. The importance of accurate assessment within this process cannot be underestimated. As one "successful" adult with a learning disability pointed out, "You must learn where your strengths are and how you can use them and where your weaknesses are and how to avoid them or compensate. I have learned to accept who I am, what I can do, what I cannot do, who I should not try to be, and who I should try to be" (Reiff et al., 1995, p.33).

Oftentimes, teachers, parents, and students themselves set goals based on an over-or underestimation of the student's potential. Career education is a vital element of the goal setting process which can improve the appropriateness of student choices (Reiff et al., 1995). Important considerations include the following:

- Students need an awareness of the wide range of career opportunities and the required preparation for those careers;
- Students need opportunities for career exploration and work experience during high school, even if the student intends to pursue postsecondary education;
- Part-time work or volunteer experiences help develop work habits, improve social skills, and further explore vocational interests;
- Involvement in community service presents the student as a contributing, well-rounded individual.

"If I knew more about LD, it might be easier for me to work with it instead of fighting against it so much."

The ChoiceMaker Self-Determination Transition Curriculum: Choosing Goals to Plan Your Life and Taking Action curricula are designed to help students identify realistic post high school goals based upon an understanding of their interests, skills, and limitations. Ordering information is provided on page 2.

Comparison Between the IDEA, Section 504, and the ADA

	IDEA	SECTION 504	ADA
Mission:	To provide a free, appropriate, public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment.	To provide persons with disabilities, to the greatest extent possible, an opportunity to be fully integrated into mainstream America. Definition as amended: "No otherwise qualified person with a disability in the United States ... shall, solely on the basis of disability, be denied access to, or the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity provided by any institution receiving federal financial assistance (Jarrow 1991).	Similar to Section 504, but broader in coverage.
Applies:	To all public schools.	To all institutions and programs receiving federal financial assistance. This includes private institutions where students receive federal financial assistance.	To public or private employment, transportation, accommodations, and telecommunications, regardless of whether there is federal funding.
Covers:	Those who have educational disabilities that require special education services, ages 3-21.	All qualified persons with disabilities regardless of whether they received services in elementary or high school. A person is thought to be "otherwise qualified" if the student is able to meet the requisite academic and technical standards, despite their disability.	Similar to Section 504 in that it covers all qualified persons with disabilities and people without disabilities related to and associated with a person with a disability.
Definition of Disability:	Disabilities covered are listed in the act, including specific learning disabilities.	There is not a specific list of disabilities, but a broad inclusionary criteria. The definition of a person with a disability is a person with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. Has a record of the disability, or is regarded as having the disability.	Same criteria as Section 504. HIV status, contagious, and noncontagious diseases recently included.
Identification Process:	Responsibility of school at no expense to the parent or student.	It is the responsibility of the student to self-identify to the institution and provide appropriate documentation of disability. The student with the disability, not the institution, is responsible for the cost of all evaluations.	Same as Section 504.
Service Delivery:	Services are determined by a team especially designed for the student and stipulated in the IEP.	Services, academic adjustments, or aids are usually provided in the regular education setting. These services are arranged by disabled student service coordinator or Section 504 Coordinator.	Similar to Section 504. The disabled student service provider or the ADA coordinator provides services.

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Source: Brinckerhoff, L., Shaw, S., & McGuire, J., (1993), pp. 44-45

SELECTION OF APPROPRIATE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

We have emphasized the importance of addressing self-awareness and acceptance, self-advocacy skills, career education, and vocational counseling as integral parts of the secondary experience for students with learning disabilities. Another way educators can better prepare students for success is to build postsecondary planning into the curriculum. It is important to ascertain postsecondary goals to guide a planned course of study. Curriculum modification may limit future opportunities and lead to gaps in knowledge, thus creating difficulty in college classes. The challenge of preparing for the transition to postsecondary education is to assist students in developing the skills and strategies they will need for success while students are undertaking a demanding college prep course load. Suggested activities include the following:

- Encourage students to explore the variety of postsecondary options available to them.
- Learn what colleges have support programs and the types and intensity of support that are provided.
- Encourage students and their parents to generate a list of the pros and cons of different postsecondary options to help them match the student's academic, social, and emotional needs with the characteristics of the specific postsecondary setting.
- Visit potential schools and meet with support staff who can provide an orientation to the campus and programs; share how faculty, student, and support staff roles are defined and explain institutional requirements. Or, encourage parents to take their child on such visits and work with the student to generate a list of questions to ask and information to gather.
- Provide opportunities for students to hear from other students who have had success in the postsecondary setting and who can share firsthand experiences, frustrations, coping strategies, tips, etc.
- Prepare students to meet the *variety* of challenges they will confront at the postsecondary level. A list of challenges that present particular difficulty for students with learning disabilities is shown in ***Figure 2.***

Figure 2

Challenges in the Postsecondary Setting

- ***less teacher contact and time in class;***
- ***more time studying independently;***
- ***fewer tests covering a broader base of knowledge, making it more difficult for student and teacher to monitor progress;***
- ***increased freedom, requiring self-discipline and self-management (e.g., going to class, completing assignments, scheduling time);***
- ***adjustment to new social expectations and a different personal support network (Shaw, Brinckerhoff, Kistler, & McGuire, 1991).***

- Assist students to develop skills in choosing, applying, and evaluating learning and study strategies. Adequate time must be devoted to developing effective study habits and skills (e.g., organization, time management, generalized study skills, outlining, note taking, memory techniques, word processing, and test taking).
- Encourage students to identify, request, and evaluate the effectiveness of accommodations to develop comfort with this process. A list of frequently used accommodations is shown in ***Figure 3.***
- Help students realize they must be proactive in developing a support network and seeking help and guidance when they need it. Students must be cautioned to resist becoming overly dependent on their support systems. Rather, students need to develop relationships that are interdependent in which they return support and offer their unique talents (Reiff, et al., 1995).

Figure 3

Frequently Used Accommodations

- Tape recording class lectures
- Note takers or copy of instructors notes
- Taped texts or other readings
- Paid readers or writer
- Enlarged tests
- Extended time on tests or assignments
- Oral exams, hands-on demonstration, open-book test, or a scribe to read test to student and record responses
- Frequent, short tests or quizzes rather than a few long tests
- Lecture outline provided
- Detailed syllabus provided in advance of initial class meetings
- Computer for completing writing assignment or essay test
- Calculator permitted
- Alternative assignments allowed (e.g., oral presentations or demonstration of skills)

Two particularly helpful resources that provide the student's point of view are:

College and the High School Student with Learning Disabilities, by Wren, Adelman, Pike and Wilson, published by Project Learning Strategies, DePaul University SAC 220, 2323 N. Seminary, Chicago, IL 60614.

Stories About Ourselves: A Handbook About Learning Disabilities by Students with Learning Disabilities published in 1988 by the Learning Center, Massachusetts Bay Community College, 50 Oakland St, Wellesley Hills, MA 02181.

SUMMARY

Over the past two decades we have seen a promising increase in the number of students with learning disabilities pursuing postsecondary education. The task now is to improve the success rate of these students as they prepare for desired careers. Assisting students to develop the variety of skills they

need to succeed in college presents a challenge to educators.

The essential components of transition planning offered by Halpern provide us guidance in this endeavor. Educators, parents, and students must work together to establish realistic post-school goals, develop self-evaluation and self-determination skills, and prepare for postsecondary education with appropriate educational experiences.

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This Transitionlinc is dedicated to
Dr. Lynda West
&
Dr. Arden Boyer-Stephens
in recognition of their contributions
to the field of transition

RESOURCES

SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH ADD OR LD is available from:

Magination Press
19 Union Square West, 8th Floor
New York, NY 10003
Phone: 800-825-3089

The cost is $9.95, plus either $2.75 for U.S. mail delivery or $4.50 for UPS delivery.

HOW TO CHOOSE A COLLEGE: GUIDE FOR THE STUDENT WITH A DISABILITY

One free copy is available upon request from:

Heath Resource Center
One Dupont Circle-Suite 800
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: 800-544-3284 or for local calls (202) 939-9320.

For two or more copies, please send your request to:

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For orders of 2-50 copies, the cost is $1.00 per copy, which includes postage in U.S. funds. For orders of 51 copies or more, please contact AHEAD for a quote.
All orders must be prepaid with your check or money order made out to AHEAD. Institutional purchase orders are accepted for quantity orders.

UNLOCKING POTENTIAL: COLLEGE AND OTHER CHOICES FOR LEARNING DISABLED PEOPLE (1987), by Barbara Scheiber and Jeanne Talpers, available for $12.95 from bookstores, or it can be ordered from:

Woodbine House
5615 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20814
Phone: 800-843-7323.

BOSC DIRECTORY: FACILITIES FOR LEARNING DISABLED PEOPLE (1990), is available for $25.00; shipping, $2.50.

BOSC Publishers
PO Box 305
Congers, NY 10902
Phone: (914) 638-1236.

PETERSON'S GUIDE TO COLLEGES WITH PROGRAMS FOR LEARNING DISABLED STUDENTS (Third Edition, 1988), edited by Charles T. Mangrum II and Stephen S. Strichart; is available for approximately $24.95, plus $4.75 UPS cost and handling.

Peterson's Guides
PO Box 2123
Princeton, NJ 08543-2123
Phone: 800-388-3282.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF FACULTY CONCERNING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES (1994)

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE POSTSECONDARY SETTING (1994)

One free copy of each handbook is available upon request from:

Martha Wille-Gregory - Project Director
Creating Employment Opportunities Project
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601 Business Loop 70 West
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800-976-2473 (MO only).

ORGANIZATIONS

HEATH Resource Center operates the national clearinghouse on postsecondary education for individuals with disabilities.

The Center can be contacted at:

HEATH Resource Center
One Dupont Circle, Suite 800
Washington, DC 20036-1193
Phone: 800-54-HEATH (V/TTY).

The Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) is an international, multicultural organization of professionals working to achieve full participation in higher education for persons with disabilities.
The Association can be contacted at:

AHEAD
PO Box 21192
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CISE SUMMER EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

L/F372 Methods in Vocational Education for Students with Disabilities and Disadvantages

June 12-16, 1995 ***1-2 S.H.***

Course Description
General, special, and vocational educators who teach students with disabilities or disadvantages will be presented current information on the following topics: Challenges to Educators in the 90s, Student Assessment, Learning Styles, Transition: IDEA (Part B) and School-to-Work Opportunities, Tech Prep, Instructional Strategies, Work Place Accommodations, and Real Work Experiences.

The course satisfies career education requirements for special education certification and Exceptional Pupil Aid reimbursement for VREs. The two semester-hour credit course is approved for certification renewal in Health Occupations, Family and Consumer Sciences (Home Economics), Trade and Technical Education, and Marketing and Cooperative Education.

L360-1 Leadership in Transition

June 19-23, 1995 ***3 S.H.***

Course Description
This institute will focus on developing leadership skills that will assist educators in improving the transition of students with disabilities from school to adult life. Students will be required to conduct a needs assessment, develop and implement a program improvement plan and demonstrate change in their district's implementation of transition services for students with disabilities.

Students in this institute are required to register as teams with a minimum of two members. Team members may include educators, administrators, parents or community members who are concerned about the future of students with disabilities in their district. The registration must be accompanied by a letter of support from your school administration.

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